

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Jimmy Green Court, 52
Coronation Square,
Reading, RG30 3QN

PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE CONVERSION OF ADVICE CENTRE TO A TWO-BEDROOM APARTMENT (USE CLASS C3)

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**JIMMY GREEN COURT, 52 CORONATION SQUARE,
READING, RG30 3QN**

ON BEHALF OF YORK ASSOCIATES/READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

**TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004**

Pegasus Group

First Floor | South Wing | Equinox North | Great Park Road | Almondsbury | Bristol | BS32 4QL

T 01454 625945 | **F** 01454 618074 | **W** www.pegasuspg.co.uk

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group to support a planning application for the conversion of an advice centre to a two-bedroom apartment. The detailed description of development is as follows:

"Conversion of advice centre to create a two-bedroom apartment."

- 1.2 This Statement sets out the justification for the proposed development firstly by reviewing the site and its surroundings in terms of the relevant physical, social, economic and planning context as well as the relevant planning history and local and national planning policies.
- 1.3 The main justification section then explores whether the proposal is compliant with the policies in the adopted development plan and considers the proposal against other material considerations including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), to which the appropriate weight is given.
- 1.4 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the associated drawings, prepared by York Associates Ltd.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The application site comprises an advice centre on the ground floor of an existing apartment building known as Jimmy Green Court. The building itself is owned by Reading Borough Council and contains flatted apartments over three storeys, with the proposal being to create an additional two-bedroom apartment on the ground floor of the south western part of the building.
- 2.2 The Jimmy Green Court advice centre has since been relocated and the advice centre is no longer used. The centre was accessed off a glazed porch located on the western elevation of the block and includes an advice shop, meeting room and interview room. Further facilities include a kitchenette and toilet
- 2.3 The building itself is set back from Coronation Square with Virginia Way forming the northern boundary of the site. The building is surrounded by amenity areas formed of open lawns with trees and mature hedges set back at some distance. The eastern side of the building includes a play area to the south and more hedges to the north. The site has multiple pedestrian accesses from Coronation Square and Virginia Way. An existing bin store is also situated on the eastern side of the building.
- 2.4 The site is located within the settlement boundary of Reading and lies to the south west of the residential suburb of Southcote. The site lies within a highly sustainable location with a number of bus services operating from the nearby stops along Southcote Lane to the south. A number of facilities are located around Coronation Square including Southcote Library, Southcote Clinic and a small convenience store.
- 2.5 Residential uses/properties make up the majority of the surrounding area. The site is not within any Conservation Area and there are no nearby listed heritage assets. The site lies in Flood Zone 1, this being an area at lowest risk from flooding.

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The proposal is to convert the redundant ground floor advice centre to a two bedroom apartment. The new apartment will be used by Reading Borough Council to provide additional affordable housing for local people.
- 3.2 The major physical change to facilitate the new two bedroomed apartment will be the removal of the exiting glazed porch and the provision of a new access via the southern elevation of the building. The two-bedroom apartment will feature a combined kitchen and dining area, separate lounge, a bathroom and two bedrooms. In addition to cupboard space provided in each bedroom, two separate storage spaces will be provided elsewhere in the apartment. The bathroom will be a disable accessible facility.
- 3.3 New windows will be added to provide natural light and ventilation into the unit. These are position on the western elevation at the location of the former entrance and porch and the southern elevation replacing a door. The existing access to other apartments within the block will remain unchanged.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 A single application is listed on the Council's online planning register for the original change of use to the advice centre.
- 4.2 Application Ref. 950224 for the '*Conversion of bedsits and common room into neighbourhood centre. Regulation 3*' at Flat 1, Jimmy Green Court, 52 Coronation Square, Reading was approved on 3rd March 1995

5. PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1 In this section, the national and local planning policy and guidance pertinent to the application site and development proposal are summarised. The plan-led approach to development, as enshrined by Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires development proposals to accord with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

i) Local Planning Policy

- 5.2 This section will consider the important policies contained within the relevant documents of the development plan. The relevant documents of Reading Borough Council's Development Plan are as follows:

- Core Strategy (adopted 2008, altered 2015); and
- Sites and Detailed Policies (adopted 2012, altered 2015).

Core Strategy

- 5.3 This document sets out the Council's adopted planning strategy for the Borough. It sets out how planning and development will achieve the Reading 2020 Vision for the town. It provides a framework for how Reading can grow in a sustainable way in the future. It also sets out how Reading will accommodate the growth expected of it in the emerging South-East Plan and through the council's commitment to New Growth Point status.
- 5.4 **Policy CS1: Sustainable Construction and Design.** This policy outlines the Council's commitment to ensuring that new development and the redevelopment of sites make efficient use of energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources during the construction process.
- 5.5 **Policy CS4: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development.** This policy relates to the relationship between the intensity of development and existing/required levels of accessibility and how this affects the decision-making process.
- 5.6 **Policy CS6: Settlement Boundary.** This policy states that development proposed outside of the settlement boundary will not be permitted.

- 5.7 **Policy CS7: Design and the Public Realm.** This policy states that all development must be of a high-quality design that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.
- 5.8 **Policy CS14: Provision of Housing.** This policy outlines the Council's housing requirement throughout the duration of the plan. The plan states that an average of 521 dwellings need to be completed per year between 2016 and 2026.
- 5.9 **Policy CS15: Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix.** This policy states that the appropriate density and mix of residential development within the Borough will be informed by an assessment of a number of factors relating to location, accessibility, design and minimisation of environmental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.
- 5.10 **Policy CS18: Residential Conversions.** This policy states that proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will be assessed against the impact on the amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly in terms of intensification of activity, loss of privacy, loss of external amenity space, the provision and location of adequate on-site car parking, and the treatment of bin storage areas.
- 5.11 **Policy CS24: Car/Cycle Parking.** This policy states that maximum car parking standards and cycle parking requirements will be applied in relation to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.
- 5.12 **Policy CS35: Flooding.** This policy states that planning permission will not be permitted for development in an area identified as being at high risk of flooding, where development would reduce the capacity of the flood plain to store floodwater, impede the flow of floodwater or in any way increase the risks to life and property arising from flooding.

Sites and Detailed Policies Document

- 5.13 This document contains detailed policies to help guide decisions on planning applications. This includes policies on matters that affect the daily lives of Reading's population, such as residents' amenity, house extensions and the use of residential garden land. It also includes more far-reaching matters such as securing affordable housing, and adapting to the effects of climate change.

5.14 **Policy SD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development.** This policy reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the NPPF.

5.15 **Policy DM4: Safeguarding Amenity.** This policy states that permission will be granted for development that will have a significant detrimental impact on the living environment of existing or future residents in terms of:

- Privacy and overlooking;
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- Noise and disturbance;
- Artificial lighting;
- Vibration;
- Dust and fumes;
- Smell; or
- Crime and safety.

5.16 **Policy DM8: Residential Conversions.** This policy outlines the criteria that must be met in order for the conversion of a property/building into a self-contained flat (or HMO) under Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy. To clarify, such proposals, "*will only be acceptable where:*

- *The proposal respects the physical character of the area and additionally would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing;*
- *There are no unacceptable adverse impacts to other residential properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties;*

- *There is appropriate sound insulation between proposed and neighbouring units and layouts avoid inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units;*
- *Bin and cycle storage is of an appropriate size and standard for the units proposed and should be located at ground floor level with easy access."*

5.17 The policy also states that, *"in the case of self-contained flats:*

- *Individual units provide appropriate minimum internal floor standards and headroom in accordance with the Council's adopted minimum internal floorspace standards."*

Other Relevant Policy Documents

5.18 The Council has a Residential Conversions SPD (2013) which relates to the conversion of existing residential dwellings into apartments and HMOs. The Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document was adopted in October 2011. The site falls within Zone 2 'Primary Core Area.' 1 space per 1-2 bedroom flat is typically required in such areas.

Space Standards

5.19 Although Policy DM8 applies space standards to dwellings that have been subdivided/converted to a HMO, the Council does not have any adopted space standards for new residential developments.

ii) National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2018)

5.20 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised on the 24th July 2018. **Paragraph 2** is clear that the NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of development plans, *"and is a material consideration in planning decisions"*.

5.21 **Paragraph 8** states that to achieve sustainable development the planning system has three overarching objectives: Economic, Social and Environmental. They are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, each objective is described (inter alia):-

- An **Economic Role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy;
- A **Social Role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible local services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and,
- An **Environmental Role** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

5.22 **Paragraph 10** advises *"So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development"*.

5.23 **Paragraph 11** sets out how to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It goes on to outline that for decision making this means *'approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay'*.

Section 4 Decision-making

5.24 **Paragraph 38** sets out that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way.

Section 5 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

5.25 **Paragraph 59** requires local planning authorities to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. **Paragraph 61** goes on to clarify that the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies.

Section 9 Promoting sustainable transport

- 5.26 **Paragraph 109** confirms that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Section 11 Making effective use of land

- 5.27 **Paragraph 117** confirms that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. **Paragraph 118** goes on and sets out how this can be achieved. Planning decisions should (inter alia):

- give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes; and,
- promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained.

- 5.28 **Paragraph 122** advises on achieving appropriate densities and states that decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land taking into account the identified need for different types of housing.

Section 12 Achieving well-designed places

- 5.29 **Paragraph 124** confirms that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to planning, and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

- 5.30 **Paragraph 127** describes various aspects of good design. Development should ensure that (inter alia):

- it functions well and add to the overall quality of the area;
- is visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

- establishes or maintains a strong sense of place; and,
- creates places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

5.31 Overall, the NPPF confirms that the primary objective of development management is to foster the delivery of sustainable development, not to hinder or prevent it. The Government's overarching vision throughout the NPPF is that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in doing so there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development to be approved without delay.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 This section contains a detailed analysis of the application proposal against the relevant material planning considerations. These considerations have been derived from an understanding of the site and its surrounds and the policy analysis of the previous section. The following detailed matters are considered:

- Principle of Development;
- Impact on Residential Amenity, Overlooking and Privacy; and
- Transport and Waste.

6.2 Matters in relation to design and access will be covered in the following section.

Principle of Development

6.3 The application site lies within the settlement boundary of Reading where the principle of sustainable development and conversion of existing buildings to residential use is acceptable, subject to compliance with other relevant policies of the development plan.

6.4 Policy CS14 of the development plan outlines the borough's requirement to deliver an average of 521 dwellings per year between 2016 and 2026. The proposal will result in the introduction of an additional dwelling within Reading and contribute towards the Council's annual delivery requirement.

6.5 Whilst Policy CS18 relates to the conversion of existing residential dwellings to apartments, some of its provisions could be applied in this instance. The policy specifically states that proposals for residential conversions will be considered acceptable assuming that the proposed conversion would not have an adverse impact on a variety of factors. These issues will be addressed below.

6.6 The proposed conversion would not result in the loss of a family home and would see what is effectively redundant space brought into residential use, with no loss of facilities for residents. The small but significant increase in the housing stock available to Reading Borough Council's Housing Property Service is a major benefit of the proposal that should weigh heavily in favour of granting planning permission.

- 6.7 The area of the apartment building was originally in use as residential accommodation and was converted in the late 1990's to the advice centre. The advice centre has now been closed for a number of years and the loss of the facilities is not considered to be unacceptable with conversion back to residential an entirely acceptable use for this now redundant property.

Impact on Residential Amenity, Overlooking and Privacy

- 6.8 Regarding future occupants, the proposed apartment comfortably provides the requisite facilities to ensure a good standard of accommodation is achieved.
- 6.9 New windows will be added onto the western and southern elevations thereby ensuring that the proposed bedrooms have appropriate levels of natural light and an acceptable outlook is achieved. All of the existing and proposed fenestration is set back from the street on Coronation Square, and will be set behind new planting, thereby further ensuring future residential amenity for occupants of the apartment.
- 6.10 Regarding the impact on nearby residents, the proposals would have no meaningful impact on their amenity in terms of noise or odour. All building works are internal or will only involve minor alterations to the existing elevations. The footprint of the host building will remain unchanged.
- 6.11 The orientation of the building is such that there is no scope for direct views into other properties from the proposed apartment (and vice versa). Therefore, there will be no issues with overlooking/privacy caused by the creation of the new ground floor apartment.
- 6.12 Finally, the proposed use will increase levels of surveillance of the external amenity areas, including one of the main entrances to the apartment building, thus helping to reducing the potential for criminal activity within these parts of the site.

Transport and Waste

- 6.13 The site is in a highly sustainable location with strong public transport links. A number of regular bus services operate along Southcote Road which is within easy walking distance.

- 6.14 Turning to vehicular parking, currently there is no onsite provision of car parking serving Jimmy Court apartments. No new car parking spaces form part of this proposal and future occupants of the proposed property will to park on existing street spaces around the apartment block. Given the current level of parking and current arrangements, bringing back into use former residential floorspace will not cause any highway safety issues nor harm the existing amenities of the neighbouring residential. Of note is that the proposed use would be expected to create less trips than the advice centre.
- 6.15 New residents will have use of the existing bin storage with 7no. new secure cycles spaces provided by the proposals to the south of the apartment block. Details of the proposed cycle parking is included within the application pack.

7. DESIGN AND ACCESS

Design

- 7.1 The proposal requires only minor alterations to the physical appearance of the host building. These include the creation of new windows along the western and southern elevations and the addition of a point of access on the southern elevation. The replacement windows will reflect the materials of the existing building to ensure a coherent aesthetic is maintained.
- 7.2 As stated above, the proposed conversion will increase natural levels of surveillance over parts of the amenity space and entrance to the apartment building. Thus, the proposal will contribute to reducing the potential for criminal activity in these parts of the site. Planting alongside the apartment will ensure the privacy of the future occupants

Access

- 7.3 The proposed apartment will be accessed from a separated entrance with a new footpath created. The existing access arrangements will remain unaffected. New cycle storage is included as part of the development proposal.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group in support of an application for the conversion of a redundant ground floor area to a two-bedroom, ground floor apartment. The new apartment would be used by Reading Borough Council to provide affordable housing for local persons.
- 8.2 This statement has demonstrated that the principle of development is entirely acceptable in this residential location and will have no unacceptable impacts on the amenities of the nearest residential properties.
- 8.3 Furthermore, the statement has demonstrated that the location is highly sustainable and the existing parking provision will be able to accommodate the minor intensification of the use of the site.
- 8.4 This Statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is compliant with both the NPPF and local planning policy and it is therefore considered that planning permission should be granted for the application.

pegasusgroup.co.uk

First Floor, South Wing,
Equinox North, Great Park Road,
Almondsbury, Bristol, BS32 4QL

E Bristol@pegasusgroup.co.uk

T 01454 625 945